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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 004321

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/12/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EG](#) [IS](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI OFFICIALS TRAVEL TO CAIRO TO WORK ON

PROPOSED BILATERAL ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN COMMITTEE

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: During a July 10 trip to Cairo, two senior MFA officials were unable to reach agreement with the Egyptians on an MOU to establish a bilateral committee. The GOI is waiting for an Egyptian reply to an Israeli letter proposing biannual meetings of the foreign ministers and ad-hoc sessions of subcommittees on political, economic, consular/legal and people-to-people issues. The Israelis said they had been hopeful of reaching agreement in light of recent improvements in bilateral relations and suggested that the USG consider raising the issue. End summary.

12. (C) Staffdel Talwar discussed Israeli-Egyptian relations with Jacob Dayan, FM Shalom's chief of staff, on July 11. Dayan said that he and MFA Director General (D-equivalent) Ron Prosor had traveled to Cairo on July 10 at the invitation of the Egyptians in the hope of concluding an MOU to establish a bilateral committee. Uri Gotman, the director for Egyptian Affairs at the MFA, told poloff on July 12 that Intelligence Chief Omar Soliman had first mentioned the possibility of a civilian committee in March 2004. FM Shalom quickly adopted the idea as part of his campaign to improve ties with the Arab world. Dayan said the bilateral committee would mirror the existing committee of military personnel that has proven successful in coordinating security issues.

13. (C) Gotman noted that little progress was made until September 2004, when FM Shalom discussed the idea with the Egyptians at the UNGA in New York. At that time the GOI presented a letter proposing biannual meetings of the foreign ministers as well as four ad-hoc subcommittees on: 1) political issues, international organizations and multilateral affairs; 2) economic issues, tourism, agriculture, and international development; 3) consular, protocol, and legal issues; and 4) people-to-people dialogues.

14. (C) According to Gotman, the GOI had expected a response to their proposal on July 10, but had not received one, possibly because the Egyptian FM was out of town. Dayan said he had been hopeful of concluding the MOU following recent improvement in the bilateral relationship, including the QIZ agreement, the natural gas agreement, Egyptian assistance with disengagement and the return of the Egyptian ambassador to Tel Aviv. Gotman explained that the GOI is generally pleased with its relations with Egypt, but is concerned that recent improvements may be linked to Cairo's interest in deploying border guards along the Philadelphia Strip. He said that in negotiations on the bilateral committee, the Egyptians continue to stall and "are driving a hard bargain, maybe because they do not believe in it." He suggested that the USG consider raising the issue with the Egyptians to help move the process forward.

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KURTZER